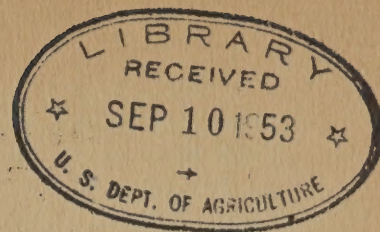


Extension Service
U. S. Department of Agriculture
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MODERN MEANS OF MASS COMMUNICATION*

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Thank you very much for the opportunity given me to talk with you this morning briefly about "Modern Means of Mass Communication." Many of you in this audience are using mass communications to tell the 4-H Club story in a most effective manner . . . and have been for many years.

With the possible exception of television, there are not many new tools for telling our stories. That means we have a continuing challenge to improve our present tools . . . to get new approaches to old ideas, and that is no easy problem. I don't want to infringe on the subject matter of my good friend, Joe Tonkin . . . one of the more able information specialists in the department . . . but I would like to dwell a few minutes on the potentials of television in relation to our most important crop . . . our 4-H Club boys and girls.

Some time ago, I made a 4,000-mile trip around the country to determine some of the needs of our television stations in the field of agricultural subject matter. Two things I found:

1. Television is so new that no experts as yet have been developed. You know virtually as much as the other fellow.
2. Only about a fifth of the television stations in existence at that time made any pretense of presenting an agricultural program. However . . . and this is important . . . every program manager with whom I talked emphasized that during every television day, one or more opportunities were presented for the use of a 5- or 7-minute short subject to fill in a time gap.

The net results of the survey and conference with some of our best-known television station officials quickly led us to the conclusion that we could profitably produce television shorts that would be acceptable to the stations . . . profitable to farm and urban audiences . . . and thereby profitable to our industry and council which is dependent upon a successful agriculture.

*Talk before the State 4-H Club leaders' session, National 4-H Club Camp, United States Department of Agriculture, June 23, 1953.

We went to our good friend Dutch Elder, of Iowa State College, to make our first two productions . . . and frankly I am of the opinion that they have produced for us two creditable shorts. One is 5 minutes in length and is woven around the fifth-plate theme, and the other is "Your 'Steak' in Pastures." Both productions . . . in our judgment . . . would be inspirational to 4-H Club audiences. Both productions also have a theme with appeal to our urban audiences.

Let me digress to say that as a trade association vitally concerned with the future . . . we operate in our public relations programs on the premise that our projects and programs must be considered valuable to the farmer and the land-grant college . . . or else there is no value for us.

There may have been some unfortunate experiences in some States in connection with the cooperation you have tried to give to the so-called commercial organizations. Notwithstanding, any organization or association or company that expects to stay in business must conform to the ethical yardsticks which long have been important to your operations. If you will permit me to be presumptuous . . . I suggest that you write your own rules and regulations. Let them be known to your commercial friends of whom you have many . . . and I predict that you will enlarge your opportunities to further enhance 4-H Club programs throughout the United States.

As one trade association, we already are working with your Washington 4-H Club representatives in an effort to find a project whereby we may render service and point up further the importance of your programs . . . and especially do we want to find broad projects, inspirational in character and practical in their applications. We solicit your cooperation and suggestions as to how we may achieve this goal.

There is one more phase in the television picture that I would like to discuss for a moment. In talking with some of our friends at the land-grant college level . . . I find that they have been offered many opportunities to appear on television. Many of them refuse regular program time . . . and there is a good reason, so they say. They say that they will not jeopardize their reputations when they neither have the time nor the necessary talent with which to do a first-class job in competition with the so-called commercial or professional program. We recognize there is some merit in that point of view.

On the other hand, let me tell you that some of the most effective agricultural programs that I have viewed are characterized by that home-folksey way of doing things that is so characteristic of the extension worker. Just one example. At television station WBAP in Fort Worth, Tex., the radio farm director is a former county agent. He has a 30-

minute television program every Saturday . . . and get this, he has 100,000 viewers. How many of you have traveled 25, 50, or even 100 miles to talk with 24 or 25 folks?

You have the most appreciated talent in the country in your 4-H Clubs, and the challenge to you is obvious. And that not only is a challenge in terms of telling the 4-H Club story to rural audiences but urban audiences as well.

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Let's not forget the importance of radio when we talk about using modern means of mass communication. Radio is far from the horse and buggy in this rapidly moving television age. In fact, in my honest judgment, the radio farm director is one of the most underestimated servants of agriculture in our whole population of agricultural workers. He does his work with little fanfare . . . with quiet modesty and with the sympathetic understanding of agriculture that is so important in our information programs. Some folks believe that the only time their services can be employed effectively is at the State 4-H Club camp, the State fair, or at the 4-H Club Congress. Folks like my good friend, L. R. Harrill, of North Carolina, know this is not so.

You can profitably use tape recordings . . . live talent to tell the everyday success stories of your outstanding leaders in 4-H Clubs. And here let me say that no substitute has been found for the success story . . . for the testimonial . . . testimonials in the everyday language of the 4-H Club boy or girl.

Let me read you a testimonial by a Mississippi 4-H Club boy who has brought national honors to his State and inspiration to hundreds of farmers. He is Lamar Ratliff . . . route 2, Baldwyn, Miss. Here is his story as only he can tell it.

"Dear Mr. Truitt,

Feb. 5, 1953
Baldwyn, Miss.
R-2

"I will tell you the best I can explain it in writing just how I made my corn and of my self. I am $13\frac{1}{2}$ years old, in the 8th grade. I joined the 4-H Club 3 years ago, and taken corn as my project. I had $1\frac{1}{2}$ acre, I broke it deep, rowed it up in 28 inch rows, sub-soiled and used 30 wagon loads of barn manure, 1200 6-8-8 and 1000 soda 16% nitrate. Planted in Dixie 17 thinned to 12 inches in drill, cultivated one time and made 179 bushels per acre.

"I won Prentiss Co. again in 1951. I used the same land and broke it good and deep, used 25 wagon loads of barn manure, 1000 6-8-8 and 1000 soda 16% nitrate. Planted with Dixie 17. Spaced my rows 24 inches with 10 inches in drill, cultivated one time and it

was a dry year. I irrigated by damming up a ditch and cutting the spillway to my dads stock pond and turning the water on the corn when it needed it. I made 187 bu.

"I won Prentiss Co. again in 1952. I used the same land broke good and deep sub-soiled used 35 wagon loads barn manure, 600 6-8-8 and 800 nitrate of soda, spaced my rows 24 inches, thinned to 6 inches in drill. I taken the advice of my County Agent Mr. W. T. Smith and planted Funks G-7-11 high bred seed corn and it was the dryest year in all history. I irrigated my corn 3 times, it paid off. I made 214.1 bu. per acre. I won Prentiss Co. and also Miss. State and the United States but shucks that isn't nothing. I believe I can make 300 bu. on that old land.

"I am going to try it this year any way.

"This corn was worked with my little gray mule I am sending you my and her picture.

"I am Yours Truly

/S/ Lamar Ratliff"

Where could you get a finer testimonial as to the practical value of 4-H Club work than from Lamar Ratliff? He will win no Pulitzer prize as an author, but as a young farmer he leaves nothing to be desired. You have some other Lamar Ratliffs in your 4-H Clubs. Give them the opportunity to tell their stories in their own words. And might I add that I hope you will resist the opportunity of becoming an editor . . . for there are many times when you can't improve on a good thing.

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Your newspapers . . . your farm magazines . . . all are equally important as media for telling the 4-H Club story and, of course, photography is an old, old tool. And speaking of photography, too many of us are content with the old stereotype photograph made in a studio of Joe Doe, Jr., who has just won a 4-H Club award. There is no comparison between the so-called studio portrait and a picture of, say, Lamar Ratliff with his little gray mule. Human interest in a story or in a picture is no less important today than it was a century ago. If you must have a posed picture, pose it with action, and I can tell you from experience that a 4-H Club boy or girl in action has a ready market on the picture pages of the daily and weekly press.

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Public appearances of your outstanding 4-H Club boys and girls may not be considered in this broad field of modern mass communication. Yet I know of no media more effective for reaching the hearts of the American public than the appearance of an intelligent 4-H Club member on a convention, civic club, or organization program. The program itself does not necessarily have to be agricultural in character . . . for the success of youth in every field of endeavor strikes a responsive chord in any kind of meeting. If you will pardon a personal reference, I can speak with some authority, for we have had 4-H Club boys and girls on our convention programs. They literally stole the show . . . and they were competing with some of the country's finest orators and authorities in the field of government, education, and politics. Get your outstanding boys and girls on the convention programs in your State . . . and I believe you will find you will get a greater appreciation for the work they are doing and the work that you are doing as well.

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Again, I want to thank you for the opportunity of talking with you about some of the opportunities of using more effectively our modern means of mass communication. Your work becomes increasingly important as we find our farm population decreasing . . . virtually no new land frontiers to conquer and 7,000 more mouths to feed today than we had yesterday. And I may be a little trite in saying that our youth today will be our leaders tomorrow. More appropriately I should say that the effectiveness of the 4-H Club program in a large measure will determine the future of our agriculture.

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